

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification to include the corrections set forth in the Certificate of Correction mailed April 21, 2000, which are shown in red in the Substitute Specification, also filed April 21, 2000.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend new claims 32-51 to read as follows.

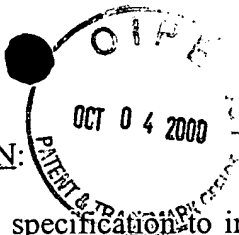
32. A starch-based composition comprising:

a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% and fibers having an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1, wherein the starch-based composition is in a shaped and solidified state, wherein the fibers are dispersed throughout the starch-based composition, wherein the starch-based composition has a wall thickness of up to about 10 cm and degrades when exposed to water; and

a coating on at least a portion of the starch-based composition which inhibits degradation of the starch-based composition and which is at least one of an edible oil, a drying oil, melamine, a polyester resin, an epoxy resin, a terpene resin, polyvinyl chloride, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, a polyacrylate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, methocel, polyethylene glycol, an acrylic, an acrylic copolymer, polyurethane, polylactic acid, polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer, a starch, soybean protein, or a wax.

33. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the coating is applied to the starch-based composition as a liquid which subsequently hardens to form a liquid-tight barrier.

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34. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the coating is applied to the starch-based composition as a laminating material.

35. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 34, wherein the laminating material is applied in the form of a substantially uniform film.

36. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 34, wherein the laminating material is applied in the form of a sheet.

37. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition includes an outer skin portion having a density and an interior foam portion having a density that is significantly lower than the density of the outer skin portion.

38. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers have a length greater than 1.5 mm.

39. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers are included in an amount in a range from about 2% to about 80% by weight of the starch-based composition.

40. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition has a wall thickness in a range from about 0.5 mm to about 5 mm.

41. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition has a wall thickness in a range from about 1 mm to about 3 mm.

Amended

42. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition further includes an inorganic filler dispersed therein.

43. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 42, wherein the inorganic filler is included in an amount in a range from about 20% to about 90% by weight of the starch-based composition.

44. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition has a density in a range from about 0.05 g/cm³ to about 1 g/cm³.

45. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition has a density in a range from about 0.1 g/cm³ to about 0.5 g/cm³.

46. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based binder includes a native starch or starch derivative that has been gelatinized during molding.

47. A starch-based composition comprising:

a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% and fibers having an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1 wherein the starch-based composition is in a shaped and solidified state, wherein the fibers are dispersed throughout the starch-based composition, wherein the starch-based composition includes an outer skin portion having a density and an interior foam portion having a density that is significantly lower than the density of the outer skin portion; and

a biodegradable coating on at least a portion of the starch-based composition which is at least one of a polyester resin, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polylactic acid, or polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer.

48. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition is in the shape of a container selected from the group consisting of a bowl, plate, clam-shell, box, and cup.

49. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 47, wherein the starch-based composition is in the shape of a container selected from the group consisting of a bowl, plate, clam-shell, box, and cup.

50. A method of coating a solidified starch-based composition comprising:
providing a shaped and solidified starch-based composition having a wall thickness up to about 10 cm and that degrades when exposed to water, the starch-based composition including a starch-based binder and fibers having an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1; and
applying a laminate film coating to at least a portion of the starch-based composition.

51. A method of coating a solidified starch-based composition as defined in claim 50,
wherein the laminate film coating comprising a biodegradable polymer selected from the group
consisting of cellulosic ethers, cellulose acetate, starches, biodegradable polyamides, polyvinyl
alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polylactic acid, polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer, other
biodegradable polyester resins, soybean protein, and mixtures thereof.